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ABSTRACT

Since 1973, the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have removed homosexuality as an illness from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (1987). Most religions, however, continue to view homosexual behaviors as abnormal. Student personnel professionals can facilitate changes in religious higher education institutions to affect the value system so that it can be more inclusive of homosexual students. Tactics for facilitating these changes include: (1) dealing with one's own homophobia; (2) involving other staff members, especially the campus ministry office, and students to develop a proposal to present to the college's president; (3) seeking the approval of the plan from the board of trustees through the president; (4) utilizing the university language and cultural beliefs in order to present arguments, such as citing scripture; and (5) continuing the dialogue that will determine the acceptable theological guidelines through discovery and transmission of knowledge and the provision of leadership to the community. Without a change in the institutional values of religious campuses, the homosexual students' environment can become a barrier toward their growth and development. (ABL)

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# Managing The Campus Ecology of Gay/Lesbian Students on Catholic College Campuses

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Abstract: Managing the Campus Ecology of Gay/Lesbian Students on Catholic college campuses

Homosexuality is a controversial issue on most campuses, especially those that are religously affiliated. This article examines homosexuality as it relates to the life of the college student. An application of the campus ecology model in the provision of pastoral ministry and student services at a Catholic university is discussed.

Homosexuality can be addressed on religious campuses without betraying the religious teachings of the Church nor the identity of the students who have a Gay/Lesbian sexual orientation.

Since 1973, the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have removed homosexuality as an illness from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (1987). Most religions, however, continue to view homosexual behavior as abnormal. At the same time, they are beginning to examine their views on gays and lesbians. For example, the Senate of Priests of the Archdiocese of San Francisco developed guidelines for ministering to Gay and Lesbian people which recognize that: "homosexual orientation is not simply a matter of moral weakness or sinful indulgence or a truncated sexual development. While these actions might be present in some persons, it seems false and misinformed to conclude that all homosexual men and women suffer from such anomalies of behavior" (Senate of Priests, 1983, p.6).

This same Senate of Priests also states that the principles of morality of the Catholic Church require that all persons live chastely outside of marriage and to live "chastely in exclusive love with one's spouse in marriage" (p.6). They also add, however, that they are quite aware of the fact that it is not easy to live chastely, "especially when one does not have the support of married life or the inspiration of vows or a celibate commitment made in the midst of a faith community" (p.7).

The statements just cited make it evident that homosexuality on our college campuses is a complex issue. The purpose of this article is to examine the issue of homosexuality as it relates to the life of the college student on

religious campuses, although the treatment of the subject is also relevant to students on secular campuses since many of the decisions that are made by university officials regarding homosexuality often have political rather than scientific base. To date, no literature exists addressing the application of the campus ecology model to Lesbian and Gay students on college campuses in general, and religious campuses, specifically.

This issue will be examined in the context of the college student personnel profession, therefore, it might be useful to explore the development of the profession and the historical perspective of its dealing with homosexuality on our campuses.

## Historical Perspective

Banning (In Delworth and Hansen Eds., 1980) has identified four different eras in the history of college student personnel services: the unenlightened era, adjustment era, developmental era, and the campus ecology era.

In the unenlightened era, colleges and universities perceived students who are troublesome as bad actors. The institutional response then was to remove these students from the environment or to punish them.

In the adjustment era, the student in stress was viewed as being ill or deficient in some manner. The goal was to provide psychotherapy.

During the 1970's the student development movement grew, creating a new age in the field of college student personnel. Students in difficulty were no longer viewed as bad actors, or ill, but as immature and in need of further development.

The decade of the 80's has brought a new way of approaching the development of students, the campus ecology movement. In this era, the focus shifts from attempts to effect individual change to a focus on student change through environmental change. The environment includes: 1) students, faculty, and staff, 2) rules and regulations, 3) methods and facilities (Pace and Stern, 1958). Alumni, the community, the religious body of the university with which the institution is affiliated, as well as the administrative structure, such as the Board of Trustees, also need to be included in the definition of environment.

Gay/Lesbian issues historically have been treated in the same pattern as the evolution of student personnel services. Lesbian/Gay students were perceived as bad actors during the unenlightened era and removed from the campuses; mentally ill and in need of psychotherapy during the adjustment era; and as developmentally immature and in need of further sexual development in the student development era. But now, during the campus ecology era, a new approach is taking place. No longer do we view students in isolation , mor do we consider their growth and development strictly from an intrapersonal basis. We must also examine how the environment contributes or hinders that growth.

The Senate of Priests Report recognizes the interplay between person and environment when they acknowledge that: "In some unrecountable manner, something 'different' has happened to shape the homosexual's development during the critical years

of childhood " (p.11). This statement presumes a social/developmental explanation of sexual orientation. It does not account for biological theories of the formation of sexual orientation (Money, 1987; Ruse, 1984).

Finally, the campus ecology era can shift the focus away from the individual Gay/Lesbian toward the creation of an environment where these students can grow. In order to do so, the institution needs to exmine its explicit and implicit attitudes, rules and regulations, and other factors that affect Lesbian/Gay students on the campus. This growth would focus on the students' acceptance of their homosexuality, as well as the growth of heterosexual students, faculty, staff, administrators, and the community-at-large in their acceptance, not tolerance, of alternative lifestyles and orientations.

Each institution must examine where it is in its growth process in terms of the eras of the college student personnel profession outlined earlier. Even if an institution considers itself to have reached the campus ecology stage in other respects, it may not have done so in relation to Gay/Lesbian students. One could argue that if an institution has not learned to deal with Gay/Lesbian issues on campus, then it has not reached the campus ecology stage, for the exclusion of these issues would mean that the institution has not considered all the elements of the environment.

Lee (1988, p. 32) stated that: " To understand the 'ecology ' of ministry, one must consider the entire network of relationships involved in its social context".

When we think of clinical issues, we often think about the intra-psychic process of an individual, however, sometimes it is not the individual that is dysfunctional. The environment in which the individual operates may be dysfunctional, thus, what might appear to be a maladaptation in an individual might actually be adaptation to a dysfunctional environment. The focus of the therapist must then shift from individual intervention to a systemic interventional approach.

In order to reach a campus ecology level on college campuses, several interventions need to take place.

Interventions

Four intervention strategies have been identified by Rappaport (In Banning, 1980, p.214) that are utilized in attempting to adjust the ecological relationship between individuals and their environment: individual strategies, group strategies, associational strategies, and institutional strategies.

Individual strategies include counseling, advising, and psychotherapy. For Gay/Lesbian students, these strategies can assist them in their coming out process. The focus would be on their self-acceptance and development of coping skills to deal with a hostile environment. Individual work with Heterosexual students would focus on examining their homophobia and lack of acceptance of people who are different.

Group Strategies focus on intervention with particular groups. Positive Strategies include: couple therapy, communication enhancing, training, and sensitivity groups. Gay/Lesbian students who are in the process of coming out often

prefer individual strategies, however, as they grow in their self-acceptance, they can benefit from meeting others with whom to share experiences and perceptions.

Heterosexual students can also benefit from a group where they can explore their values in relationship to others' values and their own homophobia.

Associational Strategies focus on organizational problems in the system. They include systems-centered consultation, organizational development, and social organization consultation. An example would be resident assistant training in conflict resolution skills to deal with Gay/ Lesbian vs. Heterosexual student floor problems in the residence halls.

Institutional Strategies, the final group of strategies, involve the attitudes of administration, faculty, and staff toward students, the institution's value orientation, its policies, or other factors that produce a poor ecology for student growth and development.

Institutional strategies can focus on the development of an attitude that could be inclusive of all students without betraying the religious principles of the institution. They would encourage a continued dialogue on homosexuality from a theological/scientific perspective.

The Commission on Social Justice of the Archdiocese of San Francisco recommended (In Gordon, 1982, p.57): "That in the spirit of social justice, local documents and pronouncements on homosexuality begin to reflect a higher level and quality of theology, that is, more in touch with the professional

literature in the field, providing breadth and depth to topics at hand, acknowledging that open professional discussion is going on, indicating the full range of the discussions, and the limitations and tentativeness of the search for truth ".

As the Senate of Priests stated (p.3): Any pastoral plan must be based upon the teachings of the Church, the results of modern social science, and the real lived experience of homosexual men and women " .

These strategies were utilized at a Catholic institution in the second most conservative county in California. The institution is composed of approximately 3,500 undergraduate students and 4,000 graduate students. Two thirds of the undergraduate student body comes predominantly from California, 54% come from Catholic schools.

The university's stated educational mission is: the growth and development of the whole person. The application of the model with respect to its mission will be discussed in the next section.

Application

1st Year. The author began to work in the Counseling Center at the university. Several Gay/Lesbian students began to utilize the services at the Counseling Center for Gay and non- Gay related issues. Being new to the campus, he had to face the dilemma as a psychologist working in a religious institution. As a psychologist, he would work towards Gay/Lesbian students' self-acceptance. Working in a religious institution this could be interpreted as condoning an

unacceptable lifestyle.

Another dilemma was the homophobia of the counselor. He had to deal with his own fear of being exposed as a gay person because he was publicly addressing the issue.

This latter issue is easy to deal with. These issues are human rights issues. One does not need to be of a specific sexual orientation to address them (individual strategy).

In order to free oneself to do the required work with the students, counselors need to have a ruling from the administration that is satisfactory to the insitution in doing this type of work. The request for this ruling allowed the university to introspect on its value orientation toward this issue and once clarified, the dilemma was resolved for the counselor. To do this, the counselor enlisted the aid of the Director of Campus Ministry (associational strategy).

This university as well as other Catholic universities base their work with Lesbian/Gay students on the guidelines provided by Ratzinger (1986) and the American Bishops (1976), which en-courage ministry to Gays and Lesbians as long as it is clear that the university does not condone activities that promote sexual behavior. These activity guidelines regarding sexual behavior are not inconsistent with those that apply to heterosexual students.

After the clarification of the institution's position, the counselor proceeded to provide individual strategies. He also introduced the topic among his colleagues to test their acceptance and support by presenting a workshop on sexual

identity and sex roles at the state convention, thus laying the ground work for his involvement in the area.

2nd Year. During the Spring of 1983, the Campus Ministry Office and the Women's Center, then headed by a religious administrator, collaborated on showing Word Is Out (1977), a documentary film on the lives of Lesbians and Gay men. This presentation drew over 80 students on a campus where the average workshop attendance is 5-8 students.

At the end of this academic year, three students, two women and one man, made a suicide pact because of their feelings of isolation on campus. They also felt that they could not continue living with the guilt of their homosexuality because of their perceptions of the church's position. Even though the Church does not condone suicide, the students felt trapped. Death seemed the only solution and a lesser sin than acknowledging their sexuality!

Fortunately, one of the students confided in his professor and the professor was able to intervene. He spoke with the univerity President, whoreferred the students to the Counseling Center. It was clear to the institution that students' lives were at stake and something had to be done to change the way the university was dealing with Gay/Lesbian students.

Notice that at this point individual services as well as a link among faculty, staff, and the administration were established and students were being educated about Gays/ Lesbians through media presentations. Thus, all four strategies were being utilized.

3rd Year. Up until now Gay/Lesbian issues on the campus had been dealt with as isolated incidents, creating feelings of isolation among students, faculty, and staff, until a crisis ensued. The counselor decided to organize a network of people that would work together to transform the institutional values and attitudes.

The counselor enlisted the assistance of the Director of Campus Ministry and the Women's Center. Together, they prepared a rationale for a support group for Gay/Lesbian students so they could have a place on campus to explore their feelings, identity, sexuality, and spirituality, in the same way that Heterosexual students were already doing through the general services provided by these offices within a Heterosexual context.

The University President consulted with the Board of Trustees and the road was cleared to establish the groups with the limitations that the groups could not be advertised and a clarification to the students that the university would not endorse a student organization. The limitation of the existence of a student organization is politically rather than theologically based. De Paul University in Chicago has a recognized Gay/Lesbian student organization. As one of the priests from De Paul stated to me: " For the decision to have a student organization on campus or not, look to the Development Office and find out who is withdrawing their donation" ( On the other hand, the existence of Gay/Lesbian student organizations may draw donations from Gay/Lesbian alumni who have been well

treated annd served while they were students).

The University was now making a commitment to the pastoral ministry of Gay/Lesbian students. The men's support group had an identified gay male facilitator, the counselor. The women's group facilitator had to be recruited from the community. She was the director of a mental health organization, and an alumna of the univeristy. The fact that she was an alumna was important because the university was assured that this person had the interests of the university in mind and the university did not feel threatened by this outside person.

An associational problem ensued when one of the students in the group about to start confided in the editor of the student newspaper about the formation of the group. The editor found this information to be newsworthy, thus creating a conflict in the organization since the university Presidenet had been assured that the groups would not be publicized.

The counselor met with the editor and suggested that she do a story on homosexuality on college campuses before any mention of the group would occur. She was not receptive to the idea, but agreed to talk with the university President. In the meantime, the counselor contacted a faculty advisor to the student newspaper, who happened to be the same professor who had intervened with the three suicidal Gay/Lesbian students. The President and the Communications Board supported the counselor's suggestion and were able to influence the editor's cooperation in the matter.

The groups began without incident with eight students each. Westefeld and Winkelpeck's (1980) model for the support groups was followed with success.

The university President also made a commitment this year to include a workshop on "Gay Men and Lesbian Women in Family Relationships" for the Family Institute to be held the following year. This was an important institutional strategy for it would set a tone of academic exploration of values that was to involve the education of the academic community as well as the community-at-large about the issue of Homosexuality and the Church. This workshop addressed the question: Is homosexuality a hindrance to the family, or are Gay men and Lesbians trying to make relationships within the family more honest?

The Insitute on the Family coincided with Jerry Falwell's anti-gay, pro-family demonstration in San Francisco. The workshop consisted of a panel of two Gay men in a loving relationship who had legal custody of one of the men's two little girls. They were also members of Dignity/San Francisco, a Catholic organization that ministers to Gay/Lesbian Catholics. Two parents of a Lesbian daughter and a Gay son, representing Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, also spoke about their acceptance of their children. A Lesbian graduate student at another local university also spoke about her relationship with her parents.

The workshop drew 300 people from the community and the university. A booth was set outside the auditorium and the

local Gay/Lesbian bookstore sold books related to Religion and Homosexuality.

This event was legitimized academically and the students received credit through academic courses for attending the presentation as a part of the requirements of the courses. Several articles about the issue were written by students in the student newspaper. This workshop opened the discussion of Gay/Lesbian Issues publicly on campus from then on.

Fourth Year. During this academic year, students began to come to the counseling center requesting assistance with class projects about Gay/Lesbian issues. A student from the television department did a show on homosexuality and the Catholic Church. This tape was shown at the American College Personnel Association Convention and the National Caucus of Gay and Lesbian Counselors Convention that spring.

A staff training for resident assistants on dealing with Gay/Lesbian issues was also led by two campus ministers and the counselor utilizing materials from Obear and Reynolds (1985).

The university President lifted the ban on advertising this year and the support groups were advertised through Campus bulletins and brochures for the Counseling Center and Campus Ministry Offices.

During this year, students wanted to move away from a counseling (you need help message) to a more social mode, where the message was a more positive acceptance of who they are. The counselor met with the Vice-President for Student Services and

the Director of Campus Ministry to begin negotiations for a student organization.

Fifth Year. A student organization was formed by the students. Several social events took place such as a picnic, hikes, and a trip to San Francisco to a Gay/Lesbian comedy house.

This year the counselor knew it was his last year at the university through personal choice. He began to make a move for the insitutionalization of services to Gay/Lesbian students. This was done through a commitment from the Counseling Center as well as the Campus Ministry Office and the Office of Residence Life to continue the programs and services to these students. In hiring staff for these departments, applicants were screened based on their sensitivity to Gay/Lesbian issues.

In the Spring, the students applied for university recognition. A few minutes before their application was to be heard by the Student Council, the priest from the Campus Ministry Office who took over as faculty advisor to the group was sent by the administration to tell the students to withdraw the application, or all the gains that they had obtained up to that point would be removed. The students complied, however, they are re-applying for recognition this year under a new administration.

The next step here would be to determine the obstacle that is preventing the approval of the student organization and develop an intervention to remove this obstacle.

This year, the university also decided to establish an AIDS Task Force to set policy for the university in dealing with faculty, staff, and students who became HIV+, or who developed ARC or AIDS. It also established a prevention program to educate students about AIDS transmission. This included the use of condoms (The university had already had the practice of educating heterosexual students about the use of birth control methods as a way of allowing students to make an informed choice about their sexual behavior).

**Summary**

Several tactics were implemented and discussed in this article that can assist student personnel professionals in facilitating changes in a religious institution to affect the value system so that it can be more inclusive of Gay/Lesbian students. Let's review them:

1) Deal with your own homophobia around being connected with the issue of homosexuality;
2) Involve other staff members, especially the Campus Ministry Office, faculty, and students to develop a proposal to present to the President, incorporating the four strategies discussed: individual, group, associational, and institutional strategies, ensuring that the plan falls within the acceptable theological guidelines of your particular denomination;
3) Through the President, seek the approval for the plan from the Board of Trustees in order that all actions by the university community are approved in advance and will not

take the university administration by surprise; the Vice Presidents for Student Services and University Development Offices should be involved in the process;

4) Utilize the university language and cultural beliefs in order to present your arguments. Not all clergy within any denomination agree with conservative stances regarding homosexuality. Cite supportig sources from your denomination in your arguments, including scripture. Challenge the interpretation of scripture where it is applicable.

5) continue the dialogue that will determine the acceptable theological guidelines through the three functions of the university outlined by Cuniggin (1967) : a) discovery of knowledge, b) transmission of knowledge; and c) provision of leadership to the community, expression of a social concern, and shaping of the public mind.

For as Ratzinger cited (1986, p. 68): " As the Lord Jesus promised: ' You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free'".

Conclusion

It is evident that without a change in the institutional values of religious campuses the Gay and Lesbian students' environment can become a barrier toward their growth and development.

Sexuality for Gay and Lesbian students needs to be addressed on religious campuses in the same manner as it is addressed for heterosexual students. To deny their identity and

their growth as a human being within their sexual orientation is a travesty to the education of the whole person. How one deals with one's sexuality is a legitimate topic for pastoral ministers and counselors to address. Heterosexuals are not told to deny their identity simply so they do not act out their sexuality. Gay men and Lesbian women deserve no less.

Ritter and O'Neill (1989, p. 13) stated that counselors can facilitate spiritual wholeness as they move with their clients through loss and grief, by appreciating the sacredness of gay and lesbian people.

According to Ratzinger (1986, p. 67): " An authentic pastoral program will assist homosexual persons at all levels of the spiritual life" .

In closing, I would like to cite the following message by Helminials (1987, p. 107):

" The essence of Christian belief is that authentic human growth on earth is ultimately the result of God's own love, the Holy Spirit, poured out among us, so in Christ humans become like God... Precisely because of distinctive aspects of the Lesbian and Gay community, life on earth for people within that community is a growing participation in God's own life, the completion of Christ's work among us, and the result of the Holy Spirit's mission to us. Thus, the Christian Gay community has the possibility and so the vocation of offering our world a model of ideal life in practice".

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